

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 A-01 SS-07 NSC-06 /024 W

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R 200328Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2211

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 6368

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, US

SUBJECT: CODEL SIKES CALL ON PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
SPEAKER

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN MEETING AUG 18 WITH PRESIDENT PARK AND
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CHUNG IL KWON CONGRESSMAN SIKES CAME
ACROSS AS MOST CONFIRMED SUPPORTER OF ROKG OF MANY CONGRESSMEN
WHO HAVE VISITED SEOUL IN PAST 18 MONTHS. CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY
THE KOREANS FOCUSED ON BIASED REPORTING OF ROK SITUATION BY US
AND JAPANESE PRESS, AND REPORTS THAT SENATOR MANSFIELD INTENDS
TO VISIT PYONGYANG. CONGRESSMAN WARNED PRESIDENT ON DANGERS OF
STATEMENTS THAT ROK WILL SOON BECAPABLE OF ASSUMING FULL RESPON-
SIBILITY FOR FINANCING DEFENSE NEEDS. HIS INSISTENCE THAT
CONGRESSIONAL CRITICS OF ROKG DO NOT REFLECT VIEW CONGRESSIONAL
MAJORITY OR AMERICAN PEOPLE WAS SO FORCEFUL AS TO SUGGEST NEED
FOR ROKG TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHETHER CONGRESSMAN HIMSELF
ACCURATELY REFLECTS US PUBLIC OPINION. END SUMMARY.

1. TO SPEAKER CHUNG, SIKES SPOKE GLOWINLY OF ROK ACCOMPLISHMENTS
AND OF ITS FUTURE AS SIGNIFICANT ASIAN POWER IN ITS OWN RIGHT. HE
WAS CRITICAL OF CERTAIN CONGRESSMEN WHO, WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF
KOREAN CIRCUMSTANCES OR EVEN UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAN HISTORY,
SEEK TO DIMINISH US SUPPORT FOR NATION CLEARLY FIGHTING SUCCESS-
FULLY FOR ITS SURVIVAL. HE ASSURED SPEAKER THAT VIEWS ESPOUSED BY
CONGRESSIONAL LIBERALS DO NOT REPRESENT EITHER MAJORITY OF US
PEOPLE OR EVEN OF CONGRESS, NOTING THAT CONGRESS REGULARLY VOTES
DOWN MEASURES AIMED AT REDUCING AMERICAN FORCE PRESENCE HERE. HE
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PREDICTED DEFEAT FOR ANOTHER CONGRESSIONAL EFFORT ALONG THESE

LINES THIS YEAR.

2. SPEAKER ASKED ANXIOUSLY WHETHER PRESS REPORTS WERE TRUE THAT SENATOR MANSFIELD MIGHT VISIT PYONGYANG, ADDING THAT SUCH A VISIT AT THIS TIME WOULD DEAL VERY HEAVY BLOW TO ROK POSITION AND PROVIDE DPRK WITH A TREMENDOUS PROPAGANDA OPPORTUNITY. SIKES REPLIED HE NOT INFORMED ON THIS SUBJECT BUT THAT SUCH A VISIT WOULD BE IN KEEPING WITH THE SENATOR'S PAST INTERESTS AND ACTIONS. (ESSENTIALLY SAME EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE IN TALK WITH PRESIDENT.)

3. TO PRESIDENT PARK, CONGRESSMAN SAID HE FELT HE SPOKE FOR MAJORITY OF CONGRESS, WHICH HAD CONSISTENTLY DEFEATED MEASURES DESIGNED TO WEAKEN US SUPPORT FOR ROK. HE DESCRIBED CONGRESSMEN CRITICAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN ROK AS "MINORITY WHO SPOKE ONLY FOR THEMSELVES" AND SUGGESTED THAT THEY WOULD FIND EXAMPLES IN US HISTORY OF SUPPRESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AS IN CIVIL WAR AND WW II, WHEN US WAS FIGHTING FOR ITS SURVIVAL AS IS CASE FOR KOREA. ROK DESERVED PRAISE FOR CLEAR PROGRESS IT WAS MAKING ON ALL FRONTS.

4. PRESIDENT RESPONDED THAT HE HAD READ OF MEASURES TAKEN BY PRESIDENT LINCOLN TO SUSPEND POLITICAL RIGHTS. HE DENIED FEELING JUSTIFIED BY THIS US PRECEDENT, BUT SAID HE HAD HAD TO TAKE SIMILAR ACTIONS WHICH NECESSARY TO PERMIT ROK TO SURVIVE. PRESIDENT SAID HE WANTED TO EXTEND POLITICAL FREEDOMS AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND AS TIME PASSES WILL BE ABLE TO DO SO. HOWEVER, ROK HAD ATTEMPTED TO BORROW AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM WHOLESALY IN DAYS FOLLOWING WW II BUT HAD FOUND IT NOT ADAPTABLE TO KOREAN TRADITIONS AND INSTITUTIONS. HE HAD NO INTENTION OF DISCARDING DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES, BUT ROK WAS NOW FACING CLEAR THREAT FROM NORTH AND WILL BE ABLE TO LIBERALIZE POLITICAL SYSTEM ONLY AS THAT THREAT LESSENS.

5. PRESIDENT'S REMARK THAT MANY CRITICS IN AMERICAN AND JAPANESE PRESS HOLD TO ILLUSION THAT POLITICAL FREEDOM ALONE CAN OVERCOME THREAT TO NATION PROMPTED CONGRESSMAN TO REMARK THAT AMERICAN PEOPLE DISTRUST LIBERAL AMERICAN PRESS, WHICH IS PROBABLY COMMUNIST INFILTRATED. CONTRARY TO LAW PRESS PUBLISHES CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS AND RELEASES INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION, THUS HINDERING USG'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH SOVIETS AND OTHER ANTAGONISTS. LIBERAL PRESS HAS GROWN SO STRONG THAT US GOVERNMENT DOES NOT ACT AGAINST CONFIDENTIAL

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IT, ALTHOUGH LEGALLY ENPOWERED TO DO SO. ANY CONGRESSMAN WILLING TO CRITICIZE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS CAN GET A HEADLINE, BUT THOSE WHO POINT OUT PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT ARE IGNORED. HE ASKED PRESIDENT NOT TO BELIEVE PRESS REPORTS THAT US PEOPLE NO LONGER SUPPORT KOREA; PROOF IS IN CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THE ROK.

6. PRESIDENT ADMITTED THAT FREEDOMS ARE RESTRICTED IN ROK BUT

COMPLAINED THAT PRESS NEVER REFLECTS RELATIVE NATURE OF THESE RESTRICTIONS. ON SCALE OF 100, U.S. MIGHT RATE FULL MARKS FOR POLITICAL FREEDOMS, ROK 70-80 AND NORTH KOREA - 0. PRESIDENT THEN SAID MOST DIFFICULTIES WITH PRESS ARISE FROM JAPANESE REPORTING. SOME AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS ARE CRITICS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT BUT EVEN THEY, PRIMARILY BASED IN TOKYO, PICK UP MANY OF THEIR VIEWS FROM BIASED JAPANESE REPORTS WHICH ARE ALSO CIRCULATED WORLDWIDE. HE THEN SHIFTED TO PROBLEM OF CHOSEN SOREN IN JAPAN, SAYING THAT IT CLEARLY ALLIED WITH JAPANESE PRESS AND RECEIVES BILLIONS OF YEN ANNUALLY FROM PYONGYANG FOR USE AGAINST ROK.

7. IN RESPONSE TO CONGRESSMAN'S QUERY ABOUT ADEQUACY OF ROK MILITARY EQUIPMENT, PRESIDENT STATED HE INTENDS TO REDUCE MILITARY BURDEN ON U.S. AS ROK ECONOMY GROWS. HE SAID NEW DEFENSE TAX, WHICH WILL REPRESENT ALMOST TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF NATIONAL REVENUE, WILL BE USED LARGELY TO PROCURE DEFENSE ITEMS AND THAT IF U.S. FULFILLS COMMITMENT TO COMPLETE EARLIER MOD PLAN, ROK SHOULD BE ABLE TO ASSUME ALMOST FULL FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. RESPONDING TO CONGRESSMAN'S REMARK REFLECTING NECESSITY TO RETAIN US FORCES IN KOREA, PRESIDENT SAID THAT SINCE SUPPORTERS OF NORTH KOREA "LIVE ACROSS THE RIVER," PRESENCE OF US FORCES WILL BE NEEDED EVEN AFTER ROK ASSUMES FULL FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR OWN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT BECAUSE US FORCES ARE MAJOR FACTOR IN DETERRING DPRK AND STABILIZING SECURITY SITUATION THROUGHOUT ASIA.

8. CONGRESSMAN SUGGESTED THAT ANY STATEMENTS ABOUT ROK ABILITY TO PAY FOR ITS OWN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT BE HANDLED VERY CAREFULLY. ANY STATEMENT THAT ROKG WOULD NOT NEED US ASSISTANCE AFTER FIVE YEARS COULD BE HARMFUL. NORTH KOREA WILL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM CHICOMS AND SOVIETS. ROK MAY THEREFORE NEED MORE HELP THAN IT IS PLANNING ON. SELF-HELP EFFORTS ARE COMMENDABLE, BUT US SHOULD CONTINUE TO ASSIST THIS STAUNCH ALLY AS LONG AS THREAT EXISTS. PRESIDENT SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AND IN COMPLETE CONFIDENTIAL

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AGREEMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, MEETINGS, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SEOUL06368
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750287-0393
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750835/aaaabekn.tel
Line Count: 156
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION H
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 JUL 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 NOV 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CODEL SIKES CALL ON PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER
TAGS: PFOR, KS, US, (MANSFIELD, MIKE), (PARK CHUNG HEE), (SIKES, ROBERT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006